

CLEFT

MAGAZINE

YOUTH

2026

ISSUE

04



A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

WHAT'S
INSIDE?

- NEWS FROM CYPC
- YOUR STORIES
- HELPFUL TIPS
- FUN ACTIVITIES

clapa
For the UK
cleft community



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Welcome to **CLEFT YOUTH**

Hi!

Welcome to the 4th edition of the Cleft Youth magazine, Lewis here and I am part of the Children and Young People's Council at CLAPA. Me and two other members, Rebecca and Isabelle, have worked on editing this magazine to make it a pool of information that you can read and use at your will.

2025 was an exciting year at CLAPA and from a fresh new look to the debut of CLAPA Yappers Podcast, 2026 is looking to be even better!

You can find information about many parts of CLAPA such as the CYPC, fundraising, Camp CLAPA and much more! This magazine is packed with advice and stories that will both inspire and support all of you readers in your own cleft journeys.

From all of us at CLAPA that have worked on this magazine, we hope you find it a fun and useful read!

Lewis, Editor

EDITOR FACT FILE



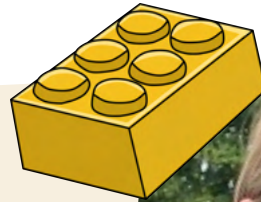
Isabelle

Hi my name is Isabelle and I love dance - I do it two times a week. I also enjoy reading a good book! I am very happy that I got to be involved in editing the mag! I hope you enjoy it!



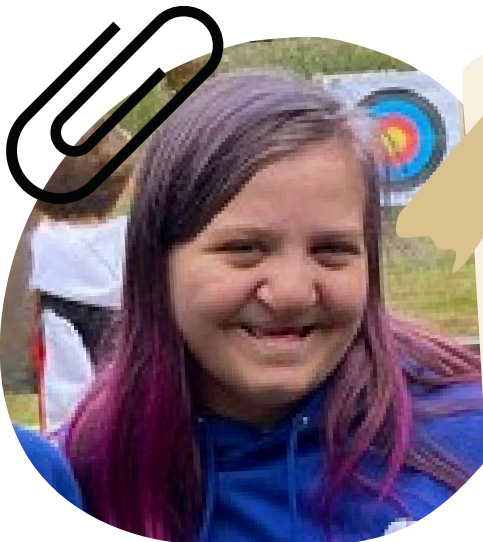
Lewis

2026 is my second year as part of the CYPC, and so far I've loved it! I'm 15 and in Year 11 of high school. I really like LEGO and enjoy working on different projects and tasks, whether they are for school or CLAPA. I like to listen to lots of different songs and spend a lot of time watching Youtube or sports!



Rebecca

I'm Rebecca, I'm 15 years old and I was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I've been a part of the CYPC for 3 years now and it's the best choice I've made. I love art and reading and I also like to watch Grey's Anatomy and 911.



THE CYPC NEWS

HEADLINES FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

CLAPA's Children and Young People's Council (CYPC) is a group of volunteers aged 12-17 who were all born with a cleft lip and/or palate.

We meet monthly to share our ideas and experiences, to help CLAPA support young people born with a cleft in the UK.

An average day of a CYPC meeting

We love our monthly CYPC meetings. Find out more about what we get up to below!

10:00

1



Welcome

First, we all have a quick catch up and a snack to get energised for the day!

10:30

2

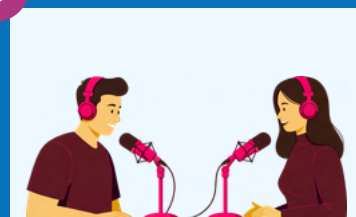


Recap

We go over what we talked about last time and find out exciting updates.

11:00

3

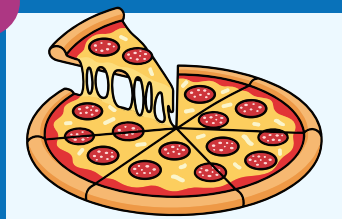


Podcasts

We're launching a podcast, so we do workshops to understand how to record and edit.

13:00

4



Pizza o'clock

Using all our brain power makes us hungry so we enjoy some pizza to refuel.

15:30

5



Group workshop

We review a tip sheet on the CLAPA website about Alveolar Bone Grafts

17:00

6



Home time

We love catching up but it's time to say our goodbyes!

THE CYPC NEWS

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON SOME OF OUR CYPC MEMBERS

James

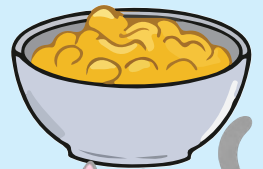
I really like music, writing songs and playing guitar! I've played a few live gigs too! I also like football, Liverpool being the best team.

I've enjoyed every bit of being part of the CYPC, from the camps to the team building!



Brennan

- * I like sports
- * I can't sit down for too long
- * I have a dog called Cindi
- * I have 3 siblings (they are all annoying)
- * I love mac'n'cheese
- * I support Spurs



Natalie



Fun facts:

- * I play piano
- * I have a siamese cat
- * I do gymnastics

Favourite things:
Food: Japanese curry
Sport: Ice skating
Animal: Owl
Season: Autumn
Country: Japan
Film: Lyle Lyle
Crocodile
Subject: Ethics



Harriet

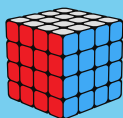
I've been part of the CYPC for two years. I am currently studying Earth Sciences at A Level and I love music and unwinding with a good book.

I adore cats and have two of my own called Willow and Hector - they're lovely but very cheeky!

Alex

Hobbies:
Gaming
Piano
Rubiks cube

My favourites:
Food: Pizza
Animal: Goat
Colour: Blue



Isla

Hobbies:
Horseriding
Going on holiday
Music and watching TV

Fun facts:
I can cartwheel
Fav subject: Maths/tech
Love dogs and horses



Kainat

Hobbies:
Playing netball & football
Watching cricket & F1
Listening to music

Fun facts:
Want to visit Italy
Fav subject: Chemistry
Want to go to NYC



THE CYPC NEWS

What did the Children and Young People's Council get up to in 2025?



My cleft journey
Lewis Bartram

Three members met with Clinical Nurse Specialists to share their cleft journeys and suggest new ways that CNS can support young people

Zach raised money for CLAPA by cutting out sweets and fizzy drinks for a month



We hosted a **Chat & Chill** event about Alveolar Bone Graft Surgery

We designed a podcast series for young people called **CLAPA Yappers**



Lewis ran the Junior **Great North Run** for CLAPA

2025

**The CYPC
in numbers**

17

members

12

meet ups online
and in person

6

new members joined

We all enjoyed our end of year party to say thank you for our hard work in 2025



Join the CYPC

Are you 12 to 17-years-old and born with a cleft?
Visit clapa.com/CYPC to learn more!

Young Adult SPOTLIGHT



Izzy's Story

CLAPA volunteer and former CYPC member Izzy has turned her experiences of being born with a cleft palate into a passion for working in the medical industry.



Izzy's cleft palate was discovered after she was born, which is very common.

“

My cleft palate affected my confidence speaking in class. It also gave me an overbite, which did make a visible difference to my face. Growing up, I had speech therapy and struggled a lot with speaking.

”

Despite all the medical treatment, including six surgeries, Izzy has a very upbeat attitude to her cleft palate, is keen to help people become more aware of the condition, and has turned her experiences into a career move.

The 22-year-old is currently studying medical pharmacology at university, which involves looking at how different medicines are made and how they help people to deal with illnesses and health conditions.

“

My cleft has shaped me into who I am today, and, despite some moments being tough, I wouldn't change it!

”

Izzy joined CLAPA's CYPC aged 11, and also attended CLAPA residential trips, which, she said, helped her to share experiences with other young people born with a cleft lip and/or palate.



Listen to Izzy's CLAPA Yappers episode on the topic of 'Surgery' at clapa.com/podcast

09

CAMP CLAPA

Last year CLAPA hosted two 'Camp CLAPA' Activity Weekends, bringing together 8-13-year-olds born with a cleft. Here's the story of how two of our young people became best friends at camp.

Leah's Story

“ I was nervous for the first camp I attended, but then I met Leah – a new best friend for life.

We bonded over our shared love of Stitch, and neither of us wanted to leave when our parents came to collect us. We've now been to three camps together, and **it's always the highlight of my year.** I really hope we get to go again!



Rosie's Story

“ When I signed up for Camp CLAPA I was worried, as I thought no one would want to be friends with me. As we got into our rooms, Rosie and I chose beds next to each other.

After that, we would talk late into the night and learn things about each other. We'd talk about our worries, or just chat as friends.

We formed an unbreakable bond –
a forever friendship.



CAMP CLAPA



GROWING UP:

TOP
TIPS

Moving to Secondary School

1

Ask teachers questions - Natalie

Whether it is on how to navigate school, the transition from primary to secondary or any specific advice around studying. Teachers are there to help with anything, cleft-related or not.

2

Find a teacher that you get along well with - Rebecca

This will help you feel confident to discuss your cleft with the teacher by yourself. Cleft isn't something to be embarrassed about. The more you speak about it, the easier it becomes.

3

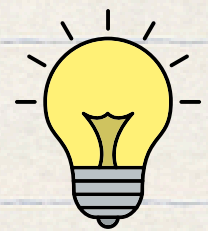
Use your voice - Thomas

It's okay to ask teachers not to treat you differently because of your cleft, if you feel they are. They are there to listen and to help you throughout your school life.

4

Remember you're never on your own - Lewis

It can feel daunting to be in a new school environment with new people but it's easier to make friends than you think, so try not to worry.



5

Think about answers to questions about your cleft - Zach

It can be hard to think of an answer when other students have questions about your cleft. If you can, try to think about what questions people might ask and how you would answer these.



Young Adult SPOTLIGHT

Demir's Story

12-year-old Demir, who was born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate, is a rising star in the sporting world.

In late 2024, Demir won gold in the 50m Breaststroke at the South Lanarkshire Schools Championship. Just one week later, he took home a Bronze medal in Judo at the Scottish National Closed Championships.

We were delighted to hear that Demir recently became the **Judo Scotland Grand Prix Champion 2025** for his age and weight. This was awarded after the four Scottish Grand Prix throughout the year had finished. Points for each one are added up and a winner for each category is announced, which meant an anxious wait for the final result!

The young champion was awarded his GP trophy at the Scottish National Closed Championships, where he won a Silver medal.

Demir's story is a reflection of his hard work and determination, and he should be incredibly proud of all his achievements so far!



RICH THE FIREFIGHTER



Firefighter Rich found fitness as a way of coping while growing up.

He smiled: "More than anything, what really helped when I was upset or wound up, was my mum's advice to go for a run or bike ride."

In his early teens, Rich was picked for the school rugby team: "Playing rugby and keeping fit kept my mind off everything. Not just my cleft or the name-calling and bullying, but the normal teenage stuff too."



“No one cares about looks in rugby. Everyone’s different shapes and sizes – big lads as props and little guys as wingers – it’s brilliant.”

Rich was born in Yorkshire with a bilateral cleft lip and palate and had multiple surgeries as a baby.

"I had to wear a hat with a brace connected to it. After one of my operations, my arms were put in splints to stop me pulling at my face, like a dog wearing a cone!"



Rich was looking for a career in which he could help people when he saw West Yorkshire Fire Service was recruiting for the first time in 10 years. He promptly signed up and, after two years of training, has now been in the service for the last eight years.

Rich's firefighter role includes working with young people, and he said he always steers them towards fitness or some form of physical activity.

"It takes your mind off what's getting you down and you always feel better afterwards. Even now, at 44, if I'm having a bad day, I'll go to the gym, for a run, or get out on my bike. It works every time.



“**“Being a firefighter is the best job in the world. I love it. It's not like going to work, and it gives my life such a purpose.”**

”

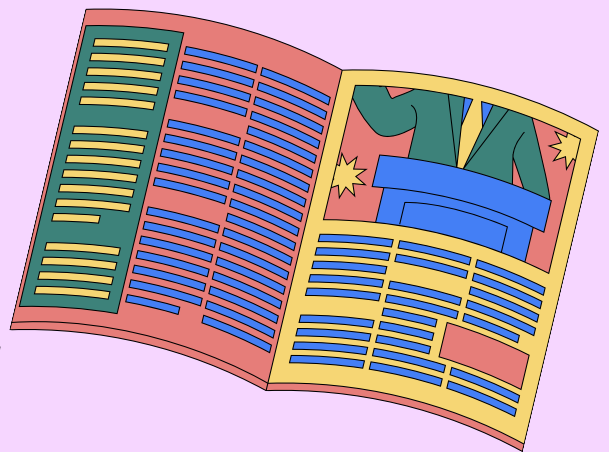
“For kids that aren't so physical, I say go out for a walk, get outside, or do something creative like drawing or writing. I used to write stories as a kid – they weren't very good, but they kept my mind busy.”

“Finding something you enjoy stops you worrying about the other things while you're doing it.”

Have you got a story to share?

We're looking for fun, interesting and inspirational stories for the **2027 issue of Cleft Youth Magazine!**

Have you done a **unique fundraiser** for CLAPA? Do you have a **secret talent** you'd like to share? Maybe you're an **aspiring actor, singer or athlete?**



Email youngpeople@clapa.com with your ideas

CLEFT+

Mentoring
for ages 10 to 17

Cleft++ is our mentoring service offering one-to-one support for people born with a cleft.

Sophie's Story

Hi, my name is Sophie and I am 12. I love dodgeball, basketball, but most of all, football! I support Aston Villa and have a dog called Rosa.



My parents showed me an email about Cleft++ and I thought **it sounded like it could really help** as I don't know anyone else with a cleft lip and palate. I had a Zoom call with Claire, the service co-ordinator, so she could get to know me and match me to my amazing mentor, Lucy!

Cleft++ mentors are here to support you

It was great to have someone older to chat to. I asked her about her ABG experience and her transition to secondary school. We messaged back and forth regularly for a few months and **I felt much more confident** about moving school, and what I could say to new friends if they asked about my cleft.

If you're reading this and wondering if a mentor could help you, I'd say go for it! **It's a really good experience.** It was great to know she understood the things I asked her about, because she had been through them too.



To learn more, visit
CLAPA.com/Mentoring



Young Adult SPOTLIGHT



Listen to Bronwen's CLAPA Yappers episode on the topic of 'Having a voice' at clapa.com/podcast

Bronwen's Story

Born with a cleft lip and palate, Bronwen first got in touch with CLAPA aged 14. Having been a volunteer since 2020, she supports with online events and is a Cleft++ mentor.



Youtube
@bronwenjane

"The cleft journey can be difficult to navigate. I struggled a lot with bullying and confidence growing up, but I found having a safe space to talk about it was really helpful.

“Realising that I was not alone was completely life-changing, and I will forever be grateful for the support I received.”

"It was my own first experience of therapy that inspired me to start my [university] course and become a therapist myself. I chose to complete my online placement hours as a student counsellor with CLAPA, offering 1-1 sessions to adults and parents affected by cleft.

“It was such an incredible experience, and I felt so privileged to hear people's stories and to be a part of their cleft journey.”

Last year, I achieved my dream and graduated with a degree in counselling and psychotherapy.

My advice to other young people with a cleft would be to **pursue your passions** – you are more than your cleft and are capable of anything. And to **reach out if you are struggling** – there is no shame in asking for help, and it is important to talk about your feelings. And finally, **remember that you are not alone.**



PODCAST NEWS



Planning **CLAPA Yappers** has been a large part of what the CYPC has been up to this year. From coming up with names to practice interviews and workshops, we have all worked on our individual parts to hopefully create some really interesting and helpful podcasts for you to listen to.

We've met with multiple people who are experienced in podcast creation to learn not only about the platform they will be shared on, but also what makes a podcast good.

Lewis, Editor

This year, we'll be covering topics such as:

- **Surgery**
- **Having a voice**
- **Confidence**
- **Speech**
- **Bullying**
- **Judgement from others**



Our new brand

In February, CLAPA launched their new brand – this means a new logo and website, plus new colours, fonts and images.

Why are we changing our look?

We've had the same look since 1979 when CLAPA began – that's 47 years! We wanted a fresh, modern look that stands out and a new website that is easy to use. Everyone born with a cleft in the UK deserves to feel seen, which is why we're now using lots of new photos of people in our community.

Visit **clapa.com** to see more.



Our new logo



clapa
For the UK
cleft community

The meaning behind our new brand

You might notice that some letters like the 'l' and 'p' in our logo look a little different. Firstly, this is because they stand for cleft '**lip**' and '**palate**' – we want people born with either/both to feel supported and celebrated. These letters are also designed to look like a thread (think old school sewing). As you 'weave' through your cleft journey, CLAPA will always be there by your side.



Visit **clapa.com/CYP** to learn about all our services for young people

GETTING INTO CHARACTER



You may have heard of Times Tables Rock Stars or used it at school before, but did you know you can add a cleft to your character?

That's all down to ten-year-old Zoe and mum Shelley who wrote to the creators of the gaming platform, Maths Action, requesting a cleft lip option.

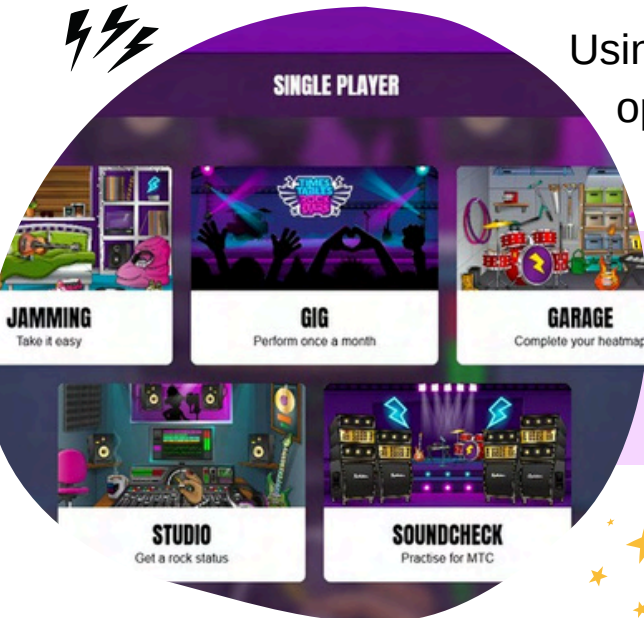
Times Tables Rock Stars, is an international gaming platform that helps children learn their times tables as rock star avatars.



Zoe's mum Shelley said there were a lot of visual differences represented on the game's site, with free features including glasses, hearing aids, and cochlea implants, but no cleft lip and palate.



“ When Zoe said ‘I can see mouths but I can't see me’ it really hit me. I thought ‘I need to do something about this’, realising she's not represented. ”



Using photos of Zoe, the game created a cleft lip option for their avatars, made it available on the platform, and contacted Shelley to tell her.

“ The first thing Zoe did when she got home that day was change her avatar, running around saying ‘it's me! It's meee!’ ”



YOUNG VOICES



INSPIRING NURSES

Early in 2025, three of us from the CYPC got the opportunity to talk to some cleft nurses on an online call. Each one of us had prepared a presentation for them and were able to share our different cleft journeys and stories.

We received great feedback and many nurses said it was their favourite part of their training course.



Lewis, Editor

Here's how the nurses described our talk:

eye-opening

interesting

awesome

inspiring



GREAT NORTH

2025

Junior Run



Congratulations to all of our amazing **Great North Run** junior and mini runners in 2025!





Fundraising Stars

2025

SWEET SUCCESS



CYPC member Zach gave up sweets, chocolate, ice cream and fizzy drinks for a whole month, raising an amazing £600 for CLAPA!

“In CLAPA’s fundraising pack, it suggested to give up something you like, so I picked that!”

John organised a bake sale and **Wear It Blue** day at school, raising a wonderful £246 for CLAPA!



Born with a cleft lip and palate, John wanted to raise money for CLAPA in the lead up to his ABG surgery, which he had in September.



Why not host a bake sale of your own at school, a community group, or local sports team?

Email fundraising@clapa.com for more ideas and information!

GET YOUR CRAFT ON

Fundraising Stars

2025



Born with a cleft lip, Holly raised a fabulous £50 for her “special charity” CLAPA. She sold badges - all of which she made herself - and bracelets at her school.

Epic effort, Holly!



HOLLY'S BADGE SALE

Milly decided to raise money for CLAPA after finding out her baby cousin would be born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. She sold homemade bracelets while on holiday and raised an amazing £333!



MILLY & HER BRACELETS

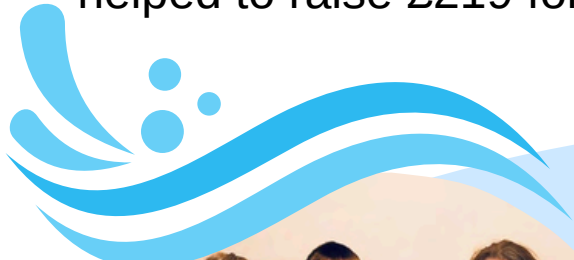
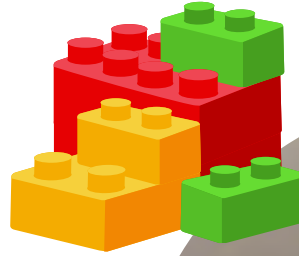


Fundraising Stars

2025

Brick by brick

Lego fanatic George built an entire town out of 700 Lego pieces during the challenge. His awesome creation helped to raise £219 for CLAPA!



Making a splash

Altogether, Madison, Neve, Charlie and Lucas swam 100 lengths in one hour, raising over £1,500 for CLAPA! Each team member swam 33 lengths with Lucas - born with a cleft lip and palate - completing the final length!



CLAPA clean-up

Charlie set himself the goal of picking up 700 pieces of litter in his local area. Not only helping the environment, he raised £100 for CLAPA.



HOW TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE

by Rebecca, Editor

Having a cleft can affect how you see yourself, but it never changes your value, kindness, or strength. Feeling beautiful on the inside is about how you treat yourself and how you see your own worth. Here are some tips:



Your cleft does not define you

You are not your scar, your speech, or how you look. You are your humour, kindness, talents, and dreams. A cleft is just one small part of who you are.



Talk kindly to yourself

When you catch yourself thinking negatively, replace it with something kinder, such as “I look unique and strong.” The way you talk to yourself matters.



Be proud of what you have been through

Living with a cleft means you'll have been through hospital visits, surgeries, or speech therapy. This takes courage, you are stronger than you realise!



Surround yourself with people who lift you up

Spend time around friends, family, or teachers who support you help you feel safe and confident. You deserve to be accepted just as you are.



Focus on what you enjoy and are good at

Whether it's art, music, helping others, sport, or writing - doing things you enjoy builds confidence. This will help you to feel proud of yourself.



Let yourself feel your emotions

It is okay to feel upset or frustrated sometimes. Letting yourself feel and talking about it is healthy.



You are not alone

People born with a cleft are all around you even if you do not always see them. You are part of a strong community that understands what you are going through.

CLAPA COOKING:

MICROWAVE MUG CAKE

Serves: 1

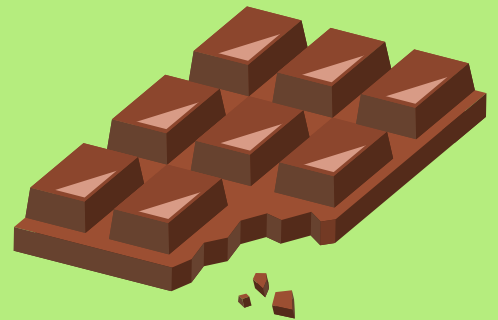
Prep: 5 mins

Cook: 1 min



Ingredients:

- 5 tbsp self-raising flour
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 medium egg
- 3 tbsp milk
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp chocolate chips (optional)



Method:

- 1. Place self-raising flour, sugar, cocoa powder, milk, egg, and oil into a large mug. Stir well until smooth.**
- 2. Microwave for 1 minute. Add chocolate chips if you like. Enjoy!**

CLAPA COOKING:

GINGERBREAD MEN



Servings: 7

Prep: 30 mins (incl rolling out dough)

Cook: 12 mins

Ingredients:

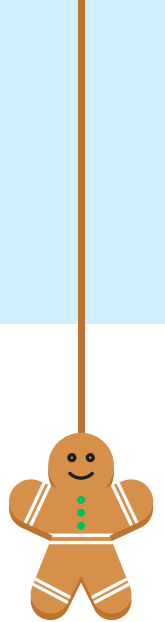
- 220g plain flour
- 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 60ml treacle
- 50g brown sugar
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 egg, lightly beaten

Method

1. Preheat your oven to **180°C (Gas 4)**. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, ground ginger, and baking soda.
3. In a large bowl, cream together the softened butter and brown sugar until smooth. Beat in the treacle and the lightly beaten egg until combined.

RECIPE:

GINGERBREAD MEN



Method (continued)

4. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture, mixing until a soft dough forms.
5. For best results, cover and refrigerate the dough for at least 30 minutes to make it easier to handle.
6. Stamp out the gingerbread men shapes using a cutter. Roll in granulated sugar if desired, and place on the baking sheet 2 inches apart.
7. Bake for 10–12 minutes until the edges are set. They will still be quite soft in the middle.
8. Cool: Let them cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

Storage

Store in an airtight container for up to a week



WORD SEARCH



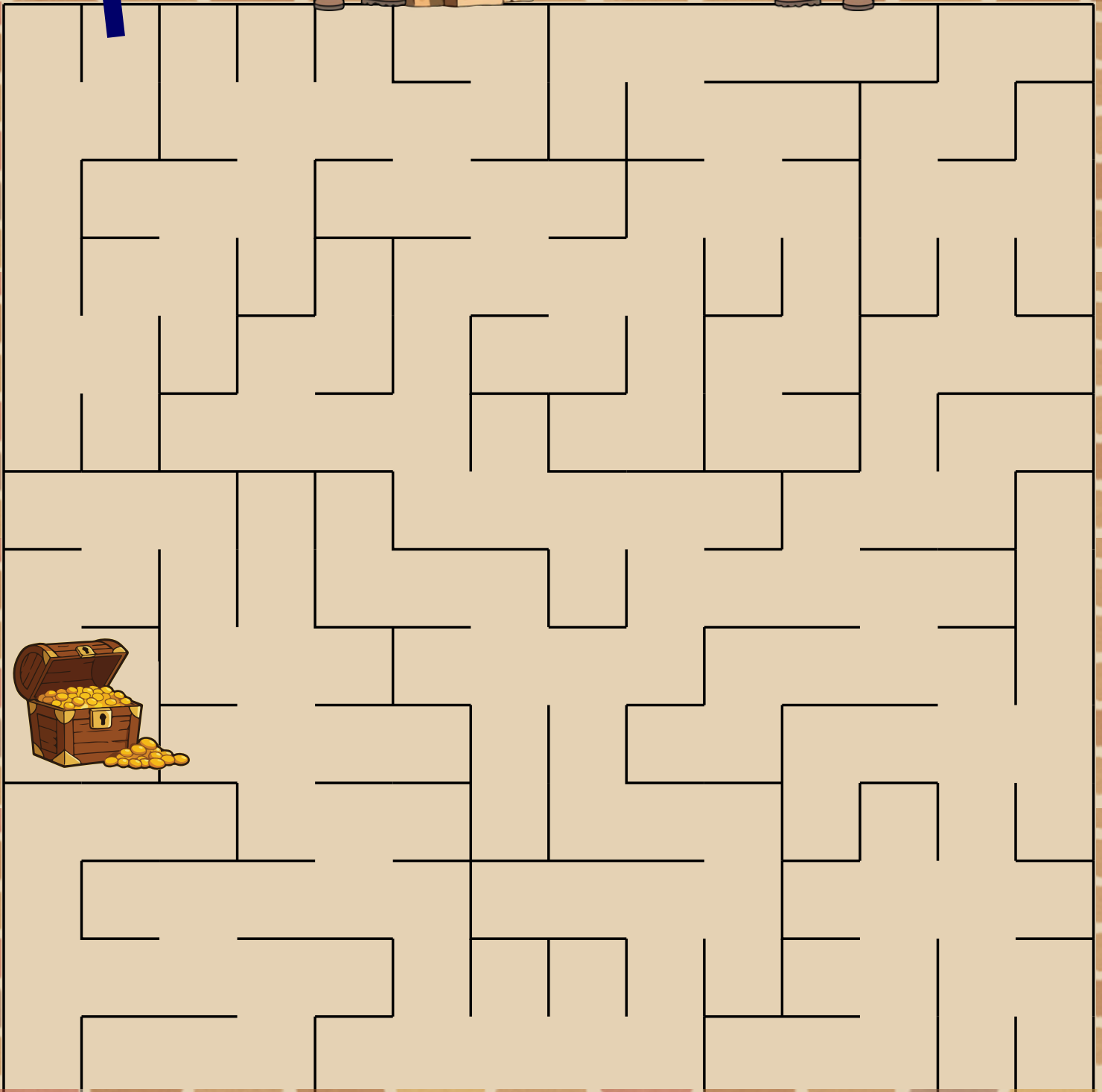
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POSITIVE
CLEFT
PIZZA

FOOD
EMOTIONS
SUPPORT

CAMP
SMILE
FRIENDS

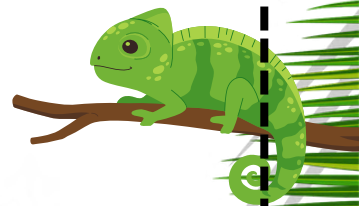
FIND THE TREASURE



COLOUR ME IN

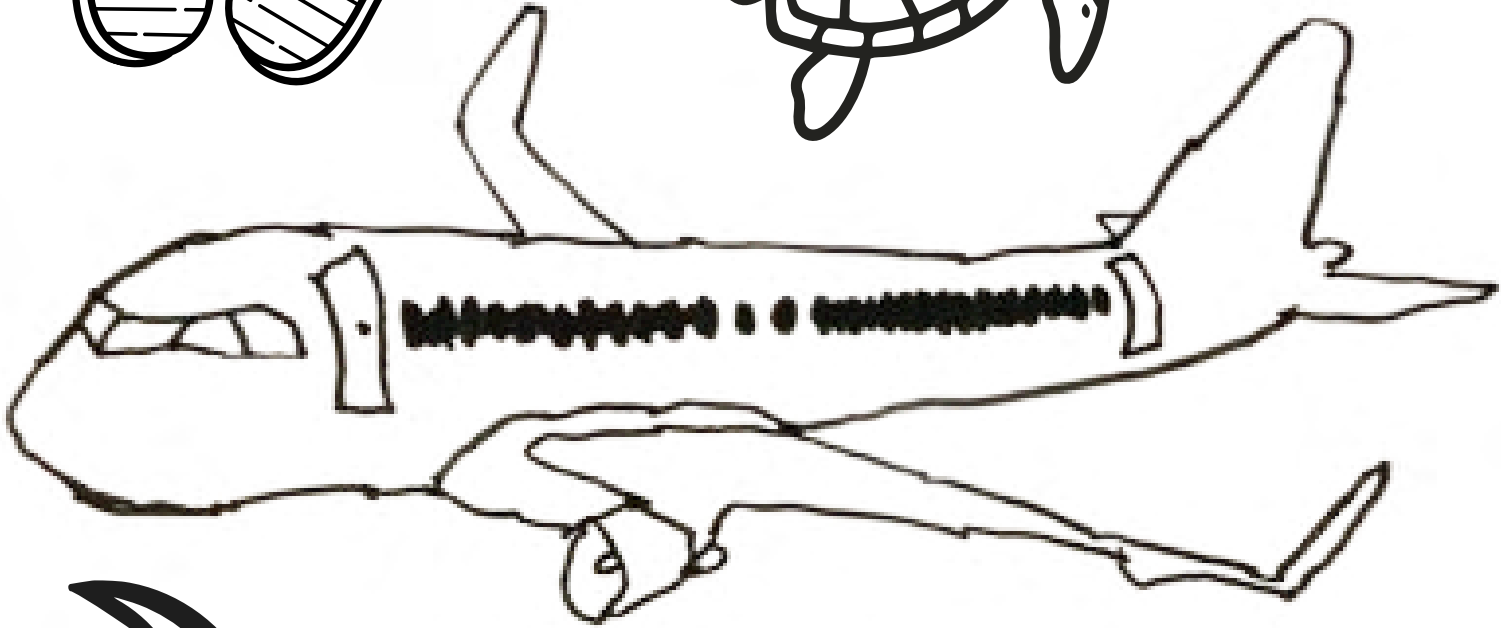
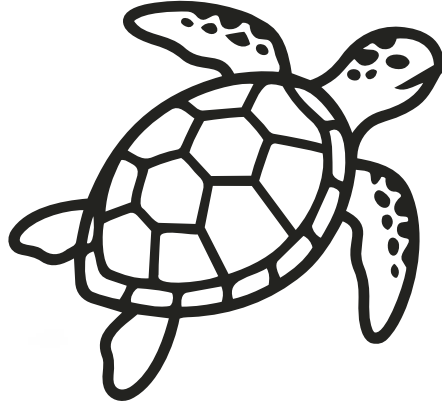


Design your own patterns on the tiger



We'd love to see your creation!
Cut this page out and send a photo to:
youngpeople@clapa.com

COLOUR ME IN



COLOUR ME IN



How many slices
of pizza can you
count?

FIND SUPPORT



If you have any questions about our Children and Young People's services, please contact youngpeople@clapa.com.

For a full list of support services, visit clapa.com/CYP.

childline

Counselling service for young people under 19 online, on the phone, anytime.

www.childline.org.uk
0800 1111



Free and confidential online 1-1 support for young people.

www.changingfaces.org.uk
0300 012 0275

YOUNGMINDS

Mental health crisis support for young people.

www.youngminds.org.uk
Crisis Messenger
(text YM to 85258)

THE MIX

Essential support for under 25 year olds.

www.themix.org.uk
24/7 live chat feature



Support for young people impacted by bullying.

www.kidscape.org.uk



Edition 04

CLEFT

MAGAZINE

YOUTH

This magazine has been published by Cleft Lip and Palate Action (CLAPA), the national charity supporting people affected by cleft in the United Kingdom.

We would like to thank all our contributors, including our Children and Young People's Council.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about our charity.



clapa
For the UK
cleft community

Cleft Lip and Palate Action (CLAPA) is the operating name of Cleft Lip and Palate Association, a registered Charity in England and Wales (1108160) and Scotland (SC041034), which is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (5206298).